



AGES 9-12

A Parent and Caregiver's Guide to Healthy Sexual Development

The preteen years bring body changes, new feelings, and growing self-awareness.

Children become curious about relationships, attraction, and identity. Your calm, open attitude helps them see sexuality as natural — not secret or shameful.

What's Normal at 9-12

Physical

Early puberty signs — hair growth, body odour, breast development, voice changes, periods or wet dreams.

Cognitive

Curious about "how" and "why", begins to understand attraction and emotional connection.

Social & Emotional

Friendships and peer approval matter more; privacy increases; early crushes may appear.



Remember, your comfort sets the tone.

Talking openly and kindly teaches your child that sexuality is a healthy part of being human — guided by honesty, empathy, and respect.

Sexual Development

- Curiosity about sex, body changes, or reproduction
- May use slang or jokes
- May privately explore their body — normal when done in private



How You Can Help



Keep Talking.

Use everyday moments — a TV show, ad, or question — to start gentle conversations. Listen more than you lecture.

Normalise Body Changes.

Explain that everyone grows at a different pace. Teach hygiene, privacy, and body respect.

Talk About Feelings and Boundaries.

It's okay to like someone. Discuss what respect, friendship, and consent mean.

Guide Media and Online Use.

Explain that movies and the internet don't always show real relationships. Keep devices visible and talk about what they see.

Support Identity and Belonging.

If they ask questions about gender or attraction, listen without judgment. Emphasise kindness, respect, and self-acceptance.

When to Seek Help

Reach out for support if your child:

- Acts out adult-like sexual behaviour or language persistently.
- Forces, pressures, or imitates sexual acts with others.
- Becomes secretive about sexual play or online activity.
- Seems unusually anxious, withdrawn, or fearful of specific people.
- Shows sudden changes in sleep, mood, or school performance.



Stay calm, reassure them, and seek professional help if needed.



Children and Adolescents with Special Needs

Children and adolescents with developmental disabilities are also sexual beings, and like non-disabled children, they also need to understand their bodies and relationships.

They go through the same stages of physical and emotional development as others, though some may experience puberty earlier or later.

They may need extra help to understand privacy, consent, and appropriate behaviour.

Use clear language, visual cues, and gentle repetition to teach about body boundaries and safety.

Every child — regardless of ability, gender, or sexuality — has the right to know about their body, relationships, and personal safety.

ABOUT US

Dil Se is an NGO working for the Prevention and Healing of Child Sexual Abuse in Kochi, Kerala.

Founded in Switzerland in 2000 by Marina Racine and Cristelle Hart Singh, and later established in India as a Trust in 2009, Dil Se works to protect children, educate communities, and support healing for survivors.

OUR VISION

A world where child sexual abuse is a thing of the past

OUR MISSION

Prevention and Healing of Child Sexual Abuse



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